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OUTSIDE READING IN MODERN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Experience of nearly ten years has convinced the writer that systematic outside reading connected with modern-language instruction is helpful and stimulating to pupils and that a communication outlining plan and results would be appreciated by teachers of modern languages.

In the German classes of the third and fourth years, in some cases in the second year, in the McKinley High School, books for outside reading are given to the pupils. There is no limitation of the time a pupil may keep a book. A minimum of four books a semester is required. If, however, the pupil reads more, a credit of 1 per cent for each additional book is allowed him.

While the home reading itself is a very important factor in the pupil's development, a still greater benefit is secured if he is required to relate the contents of such books to the teacher, either orally or in writing. This gives him additional opportunity to make practical use of the language he is striving to acquire. I have asked the third- and fourth-year classes to discuss in writing, freely and unreservedly, the matter of outside reading. One of these reports which shows sound judgment and is a frank statement of experience follows:

MY OPINION OF OUTSIDE READING

In the last two years of our German at the high school, we are required to do some outside reading. The reason I hated it so at first must have been either that I was too young to see into the matter correctly, or that it was new to me. At any rate, I know now that I shall never hate outside reading again. In glancing at the instructor's records of my readings from the last two years, I notice that I have read from two to three books more each semester; this indicates the increase of interest I have taken.

For a school library we have a considerable number of books from which to choose. Students differ in their selection of books. Some like the drama,

others romance, others history. There are enough books to satisfy their individual tastes. The instructor leaves the selection of books entirely to the pupil, unless he wishes to have some judgment passed on the book. I, for one, like the romances and historical accounts. My wish has always been well satisfied, and I have come to a point where I enjoy reading a German novel even better than an English one.

Such reports show plainly that the pupils themselves are convinced that outside reading does not mean a burden to them, but, quite the contrary, that it makes their work easier and more enjoyable. The same is true with regard to the work of the teacher. Of course, under the present plan we devote much time to the interests of the pupils. But it is clear, if outside reading improves the class work, if it stimulates the pupil's ambition and interest, if it helps him to overcome difficulties in grammar and construction, and if it makes him more self-reliant in the practical use of the language, then surely the teacher's work becomes also easier, gives him more enjoyment and satisfaction, and lifts his whole task to a higher plane. Will he not gladly devote some extra time to his pupils, if joy and enthusiasm, increased interest and sincere gratitude on the part of the pupils are his reward?

In accordance with the German principle: "*Das Nützliche mit dem Angenehmen verbinden*," I have endeavored to organize a small library which should contain not only useful books, but also interesting ones, books which the pupils would read with pleasure, and which at the same time could be classified as "*gute Jugendliteratur*."

I have been fully aware of the danger to which every teacher who selects books for his pupils is exposed; that is the danger of selecting what he likes, regardless of what pupils like. I have tried to avoid this danger, and have fully realized that making mistakes in that direction would mean a complete failure of the whole project. I need only call attention to the way in which textbooks for our regular class work are selected, many of them being unfit for young people, so few of them really appealing to their taste. In selecting books teachers are generally very careful to choose works of standard authors. This, of course, is perfectly correct, if the viewpoint of the pupil, his taste, and his capacity to grasp details, as well as the plot, are taken into proper consideration; but too often classics are chosen for which the pupils are too immature,

especially if we consider that they are studying a foreign language, to acquire which is in itself a task. Their work should not be made more difficult than it already is. We should never forget that in the high school the teaching of *language* is the main purpose and not the teaching of literature, at least not in a foreign language and not before the fourth year or the college grades. But, according to tradition, certain texts are read year after year—texts that cannot interest pupils, to whom often is done great wrong and far-reaching injustice as a consequence of this policy.

In building up my library, I have remembered the books I enjoyed myself in younger years, books which I should welcome as Christmas and birthday presents. In making selections for the girls, I recalled books which were favorites of my sister and her friends. With these books I started out, reading each one again before placing it in the hands of the pupils. Moreover, I have asked the different classes to make out lists of the books they have read and to indicate by letters or percentage figures, as customary on the report cards, the degree of their approval in regard to each book. Guided by these lists I have ordered more books, and of such authors as seemed to appeal mostly to their taste. From time to time I have introduced new authors and have frequently renewed the experiment. In this way I have finally succeeded in creating a library for outside reading which seems to satisfy the demand and the taste of the pupils. I am glad to mention the generosity and very efficient manner in which the St. Louis Public Library assisted me in carrying out my plans and has helped to arouse and maintain in so many of our high-school pupils a desire to read German books.

That these young people really enjoy reading such books, sometimes even in preference to English ones, may be seen in the following excerpts from the reports mentioned above:

"To supplementary German reading I owe a great deal of my real interest in the German language."

"The more German books one reads, the better he likes them. I like to read German books as well as English, and I have read more German ones in the last year than English ones in the last four years."

"Supplementary reading of German books carries with it many benefits. Chief among these is an enlargement of the student's vocabulary, which comes with much reading. Fluency of speech, one of the aims of every language

student, is acquired not only by reading, but also through telling the story to the instructor."

"The books are usually very interesting. This makes their reading a pleasant instead of a tiresome task. This seems to me at least a matter of great value, as it develops a true liking for the language."

Such advantages of outside reading as enlargement of the vocabulary, getting used to proper constructions, obtaining a better appreciation of German conditions, improvement of the pupils' geographical and historical knowledge, a more intimate acquaintance with the German people, all these things were brought out in the various essays. I do not need to reproduce such passages; but to point out some of the far-reaching and very gratifying effects of the outside method is not only my duty, but my pleasure.

Pupils who continued their language studies at the university have often told me that the outside reading in the high school has helped them much in their advanced work in literature courses and that they fully realized the advantage they have over students who did not have this training. Such authors as Goethe, Schiller, Grillparzer, Ludwig, Hebbel, C. F. Meyer, Gottfried Keller, Wildenbruch are represented especially in the library of the Senior class. The older pupils read these works with interest and in most cases with a certain, though naturally limited, comprehension.

Another very satisfying evidence of the good results of the outside reading practice was brought out in cases where pupils did not report on their books as promptly as I might have desired. On being asked what had happened to their books, they frequently told me that they had read them long ago and were ready to report, but would ask permission to keep the book a little longer, because father, mother, or sister was reading it also. In some cases father and son, or mother and daughter were reading the book together, thus causing a delay which, I found, was indeed very pardonable.

In order to treat the subject in a perfectly truthful manner I shall not pass over in silence the fact that two reports were unfavorable; one of these is partly, and the other one entirely, antagonistic. Both of them are, however, written by pupils in the third year, and there is consequently still hope for improvement. The great majority are fully in sympathy with the work. It is

with much satisfaction that I can report that some of the pupils have read as many as sixteen or eighteen books a semester, pupils who nevertheless are doing full justice to their duties in other departments, and who are known as being among the best students of the school.

A list of the books in my library follows:

GERMAN BOOKS

FOR BOYS

Author	Title	Year
Brandstätter, H.	<i>Die Zaubergeige</i>	III
Bulwer, E. L.	<i>Die letzten Tage v. Pompeji</i>	III
Marryat, Kapt.	<i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>	III
“ “	<i>Sigismund Rüstig</i>	III
May, K.	<i>Die Sklavenkarawane</i>	III
“ “	<i>Der Schatz im Silbersee</i>	III
Nieman, A.	<i>Das Geheimnis der Mumie</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Pieter Maritz</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Flibustierbuch</i>	III or IV
Riehl, W. H.	<i>Der Fluch der Schönheit</i>	II
Schwab, S.	<i>Die Sagen Trojas</i>	III
Tanera, K.	<i>Das Erbe der Abencerragen</i>	III or IV
Wildenbruch, E.	<i>Das edle Blut</i>	II or III
“ “	<i>Neid</i>	II or III
Wörishöffer, S.	<i>Onnen Visser</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Kreuz und quer d. Indien</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Die Diamanten d. Peruaners</i>	III or IV

FOR GIRLS

Hartner, E.	<i>Als Stütze d. Hausfrau</i>	III
“ “	<i>Licht und Schatten</i>	III
“ “	<i>Pension und Elternhaus</i>	III
Helm, C.	<i>Die Geschwister Leonard</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Professorentöchter</i>	III or IV
“ “	<i>Unsere Selektä</i>	III or IV
Marlitt, E.	<i>Goldelse</i>	IV
“ “	<i>Geheimnis d. alten Mamsell</i>	IV
“ “	<i>Reichsgräfin Gisela</i>	IV
“ “	<i>Die zweite Frau</i>	IV
Niese, C.	<i>Das Dreigespann</i>	II or III
Schanz, F.	<i>Rottraut und Ilse</i>	III
Schulze-Smidt	<i>Mellas Studentenjahr</i>	III
“ “	<i>Holde Siebzehn</i>	III or IV
Schroeder	<i>Rita</i>	III
Zobeltitz, E. v.	<i>Backfischkasten</i>	III or IV
“ “ “	<i>Heiratsjahr</i>	III or IV

FOR BOYS OR GIRLS

Author	Title	Year
Baumbach, R. (Heath & Co.)	<i>Die Nonna</i>	II or III
Bernhard, W. " " "	<i>Der Weg zum Glück</i>	II
Blüthgen, V. " " "	<i>Das Peterle v. Nürnberg</i>	II
Goethe, Joh. W. " " "	<i>Goetz v. Berlichingen</i>	IV
Grillparzer, F.	<i>Das Goldene Vliess</i>	IV
" " (Holt & Co.)	<i>Die Ahnfrau</i>	IV
Hebbel, F.	<i>Die Nibelungen</i>	IV
" " (Heath & Co.)	<i>Agnes Bernauer</i>	IV
Heyse, P. (Holt & Co.)	<i>Die Blinden</i>	II or III
Ibsen, H.	<i>Ein Volksfeind</i>	IV
Keller, G. (Heath & Co.)	<i>Kleider machen Leute</i>	III
" " " " "	<i>Romeo und Julia a. d. Dorfe</i>	III
Lessing, G. E.	<i>Nathan d. Weise</i>	IV
Lohmeyer, J.	<i>Der Geissbub v. Engelberg</i>	II
Ludwig, O.	<i>Der Erbförster</i>	IV
Meyer, C. F. (Heath & Co.)	<i>Jürg Jenatsch</i>	IV
Rosegger, P. " " "	<i>Der Lex v. Gulenhag</i>	II
Schiller, F.	<i>Jungfrau v. Orleans</i>	III
" " "	<i>Maria Stuart</i>	III or IV
" " "	<i>Wallenstein</i>	IV
Storm, Th. (Ginn & Co.)	<i>Der Schimmelreiter</i>	III
Sudermann, H.	<i>Frau Sorge</i>	IV
Werner, E.	<i>St. Michael</i>	III
" " "	<i>Gebannt u. erlöst</i>	III
" " "	<i>Hexengold</i>	III or IV
" " "	<i>Fata Morgana</i>	III or IV

FRENCH BOOKS

FOR BOYS OR GIRLS

About, E.	<i>Le Buste</i>	II
Ardel, H.	<i>Mon cousin Guy</i>	II or III
" " "	<i>Rève Blanc</i>	III
Enault, L.	<i>Le Chien du capitaine</i>	II
Erckmann-Chatrian	<i>L'Ami Fritz</i>	III or IV
Feuillet, O. (William R. Jenkins)	<i>Le Roman d'un j. homme pauvre</i>	IV
Gennevraye, A. " " "	<i>L'Ombra</i>	II or III
Julliot, Fr. de " " "	<i>Mlle Solange</i>	III
Ohnet, G. " " "	<i>Le Chant du cygne</i>	II
" " "	<i>Le Maître de forge</i>	III
Malot, H.	<i>Sans famille</i>	II or III
Peyrebrune, G. de	<i>Les Frères Colombe</i>	II
Toudouze, G.	<i>Madame Lambelle</i>	III
Ventura, L. D.	<i>Peppino</i>	III
Verne, Jules	<i>Le Tour du monde</i>	III
Vervins, Comte de	<i>Deux artistes en voyage</i>	II